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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 29 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

This is our second letter in less than two days confirming our absolute condemnation of Israel's criminal military campaign against the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. For three days, Israeli fighter jets have pounded hundreds of targets across the Gaza Strip, killing over 300 Palestinians and injuring almost 1,500 others. Gaza is no longer on the brink of disaster; it is living that disaster, which Israel, the occupying Power, has imposed on the one and a half million Palestinians it has imprisoned, starved, and tormented in Gaza under false and sinister pretexts.

We welcomed the statement of the Security Council calling for an immediate cessation to the unprecedented violence in Gaza, which was echoed in the statement of the Secretary-General issued yesterday and in that of the President of the General Assembly issued on 27 December, as well as similar international calls for an end to the bloodshed. However, the Palestinian leadership believes that additional and urgent steps need to be taken in the light of the alarming situation on the ground and given Israel's persistence in carrying out its brutal aggression in Gaza despite those calls.

Since those statements, the civilian population in Gaza has been living in constant horror, caught in an aggression that has turned every corner in the besieged strip into a target and transformed the homes of unsuspecting civilians into death traps. That was the tragic case of the Balusha family in the Jabalia refugee camp, where five girls were buried under the rubble of their home when a mosque targeted by Israeli missiles came crashing down on their home while they were sleeping.

Hospitals also have not been spared. Several hospitals have sustained heavy damage from Israeli bombardment carried out in utter disregard of internationally safeguarded positions, which has also included schools, houses of worship, universities, prisons and other institutions. These hospitals are facing diminishing

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supplies of crucially needed medicines and blood units because of the Israeli siege and are overwhelmed by the sheer number of casualties flooding their wards.

Israel has also introduced a new level of purely civilian targets to its long hit list in Gaza, targeting Gaza's Islamic University, schools, medical warehouses and paramedics. These flagrantly illegal and criminal acts must be condemned in the strongest terms and brought to an immediate end. The international community must not tolerate such perpetration of crimes and must come to bear its responsibility by enacting consequences for these crimes, lest it be a partner in further entrenching Israel's shameless impunity.

Israel's massive air strikes against targets in the densely populated Strip have also killed UNRWA trainees and staff members, including some who were inside an UNRWA facility. We strongly condemn those and all other brutal killings of innocent civilians. That is why we urge the Security Council to take immediate and effective action to uphold its standing responsibilities in accordance with the Charter and put an end to this bloodbath.

At the same time, we must not forget that Israel, as an occupying Power, has standing legal and moral obligations to protect the Palestinian civilian population and to ensure that they have full access to vital services. The High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention have a clear obligation to ensure that Israel fully abides by these responsibilities. Yet, Israel is violating all these obligations with impunity. Anything short of concrete action will only serve to encourage Israel to continue acting with impunity and in utter disregard of the principles and provisions of international law.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 324 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 27 December 2008 (A/ES-10/428-S/2008/819), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter.)

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine